







Kombucha Cocktails

PROBIOTIC DRINKING MADE DRUNKER by Camilla Mortenser

survive mainly on kombucha, coffee and hard liquor. Mixing coffee with whiskey is kind of a no-brainer. I'm perky and buzzed — what could go wrong? Kombucha, in large doses, has a similar effect on me. Given my predilection for caffeine and adult beverages, kombucha cocktails strike me as pure genius.

For those of you who are new to the kombucha craze — I hesitate to call it a fad, since I've got friends who have been singing its praises for years — kombucha is a probiotic brew of tea fermented with yeast and bacteria, aka a "mother" or a "scoby" (symbiotic colony of bacteria and yeast), often likened to a mushroom. It has low levels of caffeine and alcohol. If you don't like it now, try it with a hangover — there's something about the probiotics mixed with a smell reminiscent of stale beer that makes it strangely palatable when you are green and feeling icky.

Recently, a friend of mine who shall remain nameless told me that he would never again drink the bubbly elixir while driving because the device installed on his vehicle to prevent him from doing something stupid like drinking and driving locked up after he took a hit. I mocked him, thinking that he was just blaming the 'buch for his own backsliding.

To prove him wrong, I took a slug from my mini-growler of Townshend's Brew Dr. Superberry. Then I whipped out the keychain Breathalyzer I had just won at a Sheriff's Posse Poker Ride and blew.

I huffed a .02. That's enough to get a DUII in this town. Duly noted: You are not supposed to breathalyze right after drinking; you are supposed to wait 15 minutes. Two minutes later I blew nothing.

So the fact remains: mixing kombucha and liquor is brilliant, but bring a designated driver along if you will be sampling the alcohol-added wares at Belly, The Cannery, The Granary or The Barn Light, all of which I'm told feature a tempting mix

of liquor and probiotics — because there's nothing like getting a little drunkered up and promoting good digestion.

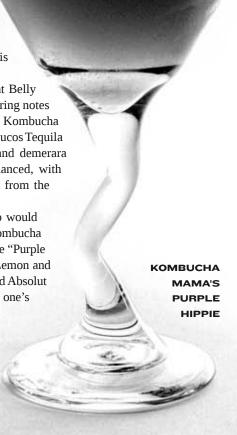
If you are new to kombucha, I'd suggest going to a professional for your first cocktail.

While my co-worker found success in mixing Brew Dr.'s Love with Absolut Hibiscus, I discovered that just dumping gin into whatever kombucha is at hand was less than appealing.

Bar manager Jeremy Shank says that Belly will mix you a kombucha cocktail, featuring notes of bitter and sweet, from two ounces of Kombucha Mama's Pomegranate Lemon with Chamucos Tequila Reposado, lemon juice, passion fruit and demerara simple syrup. Shank says it's well balanced, with bitter from the pomegranate and sweet from the passion fruit and demerara.

For you kombucha low-baggers who would rather mix your drinks at home, Kombucha Mama has a drink list you can follow. The "Purple Hippie" also features the Pomegranate Lemon and it uses a lemon twist, a lemon squeeze and Absolut vodka. As the *EW* staff can attest, that one's pretty darn good.

From Kore Kombucha to Townshend's to whatever your best friend is brewing from the scoby in his closet, Oregon is not lacking in 'buch to mix with your hooch. Go forth and let the scobys multiply.





How Bloody Can You Get?

TASTE-TESTING EUGENE'S BLOODY MARYS by Vanessa Salvia

he Bloody Mary, that quintessential tomato and vodka drink, is no longer considered just a hangover corrective. When well garnished with vegetables and perhaps a shrimp (and even a hamburger, as I found at one Junction City spot), it's a darn good approximation of a soup and salad — virtuous enough to provide some vitamins while smoothing out any roughness of the day.

A classic Bloody Mary comes with a celery stalk, a pickled green bean and, perhaps, a dill pickle spear and an olive or two. Given today's farm-to-table sensibility and cocktail experimentation, you'll have to look far and wide to find this side-salad combo. After trekking to nine local establishments on my quest, I found only one, at The Cannery, that provided the pickled green bean.

The Cannery's bartender asked me how spicy I wanted my drink, and I went with "spicy-spicy," which was a mistake. The Cannery infuses Sobieski vodka with jalapeño and habanero. Overall, it was tasty, but I couldn't make peace with the level of heat. The sweet, pickled-pepper garnish and the ice water chaser provided the only relief.

The Barn Light crafted a Bloody Mary using a flotilla of ingredients. Sea salt, cayenne, Old Bay seasoning, lime juice, Sriracha, Worcestershire, Tabasco and horseradish went into the jalapeño-infused Monopolowa vodka and top-secret tomato juice blend, along with a float of espresso stout. For garnish, they went the nontraditional route with a slice of maple bourbon-glazed bacon. The bacon was certainly delicious, but in the future I'll save the meat for my bourbon cocktails. I really missed the pickled tidbits.

Lucky Noodle wins for the freshest, crispest celery. I was offered a choice of the regular or the spicier Hail Mary; in the interest of science, I ordered one of each. Made with jalapeño basil vodka, the Hail Mary was noticeably spicier and slightly more herbal. Simply garnished with lime, celery and olives, it was tasty but perhaps a bit spendy at \$8 for the regular and \$9 for the Hail Mary.

Jackalope's drink was tasty but nothing special, though it did come with a nice cherry pepper. At High Street Café, a generous pour of Fleischmann's vodka sank to the bottom of the house-made tomato mixture and melted ice, though the pickled garlic garnish was a nice addition. To be fair, the bartender told me she is not normally a drink maker.

The Pour House surprised me with a pickled carrot garnish, though its drink had too much horseradish and too much olive juice, lending it an inescapable bitter edge.

For a Bloody Mary along with a delicious breakfast, it's hard to beat Brails, whether you're hungover or not. There were two other stand-outs: Horsehead and The Rodeo Steakhouse in Junction City. Horsehead bartender Kelly Wilson expertly combined A.1., Worcestershire, celery salt, cayenne, Sriracha, olive juice, vodka and tomato juice. Before serving me and my companion, he tastetested each one and garnished them with umbrellas. They were delicious.

The Rodeo Steakhouse was the winner for the most creative garnish. Its tasty drink comes in a quart-size Mason jar along with olives, lemon, lime, celery, slices of smoky cheese, slices of pepper jack cheese, a grilled shrimp and a hamburger slider. Totally worth the drive to get this delicious "soup and sandwich" combo for only \$9.99

As I embarked upon this quest and chronicled my taste-testings on Facebook, I was given many suggestions of "must-try" drinks I just couldn't get to. A last-minute Facebook throwdown from The Davis will likely kick off part two of the Bloody Mary Diaries.





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Donie Smith

HORSEHEAD BAR by Amy Schneider

Donie Smith started working at the Horsehead Bar about a year ago, but that was enough time to garner her a "sexiest bartender" win. A Cottage Grove native, Smith says she was a bit surprised to hear she had won. She shouldn't be, because voters raved about her "perfect smile," "great personality" and "sweet-ass tats."

One voter wrote that "the way she pours an ice cold PBR sends tantalizing synaptic messages through the most primal parts of my brain." That's pretty hard to beat.

What makes you the sexiest bartender?

Actually, I was not expecting this at all. I have no idea. What do people usually say? Maybe because I'm young? I guess I'm pretty modest.

A lot of people commented on how sexy your tattoos are. Could you describe them?

I have a Day of the Dead sugar skull on the back of my neck and the Eye of Ra on my wrists. I've got a lotus flower and the Greek god of desire on my ankle. Most of them were done right after I turned 18, but the one on my wrist I just did a couple months ago.

What's your favorite part of tending bar?

Cottage Grove is such a small town, so I absolutely love that I'm in a town where I don't know everybody and I get to meet new faces and hear different stories, and just take in and listen to what everybody's got to say.

What's your least favorite part?

I don't know, sorry!

What's the weirdest thing that's ever happened while you were bartending?

I would have to say it was last night. The manager told me that somebody was trying to get a hold of me for sexiest bartender, and he gave me the phone number to call, but he gave me the wrong number, so I ended up calling some random guy. When I called and asked about it, he said, "Are you sure you're supposed to be talking to me?" And I said, "I'm sorry, I think someone's playing a cruel joke on me." But then he said, "Wait, are you single?" And he said if I'm ever in the Horsehead, maybe we can meet up. So when I came into the bar last night, I was on the lookout for this random guy who I called.

What would you say is your signature drink?

I love making a Fresh and Clean [vodka, lemon, soda water]. Do you mean what's my favorite drink? That would either be Hefeweizen or a Fresh and Clean. ■

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Ben Lundberg

STARLIGHT LOUNGE by Amy Schneider

Ben Lundberg, 33, was born and raised in Eugene and has been tending bar at the Starlight Lounge for more than four years. In his spare time, he's a photographer, which adds to the list of admirable qualities that voters mentioned, including his "boyish charm" and "phenomenal personality." One voter opined that Lundberg is "downright a good person." What could be sexier?

What makes you the sexiest bartender?

I'm outgoing, friendly, flirty, easy to get along with, nonjudgmental. Pretty much from age 20 to 30, I partied, bartended and served in this area, so I'm pretty well known.

A lot of people commented on your smile. Would you say that's one of your best features?

I would say yeah, my smile and my eyes. I get a lot of comments on my eyes because of the fact they're different depending on how you look at them. Also my laugh — I get comments on my laugh a lot. I'm pretty recognizable in a crowd.

What's your favorite part of tending bar?

Just the social aspect of it. It's fun to hang out and meet people, and provide people with a good time. And drinking, of course.

What's your least favorite part?

People who are self-entitled and demanding, thinking it's some kind of college party where they can just be jackasses. That's probably the worst.



What's the weirdest thing that's ever happened while you were bartending?

I don't know, I've been around for such a long time. I do have a funny story of this kid one time; it was one of the most random, dumb things that was brought to my attention. So, I cut this kid off; he was pretty drunk and disappeared for 45 minutes, but then I saw him walking through the bar again, holding a drink. I thought it might have been the last drink I served him before cutting him off, so I asked him where he got it, and he said, "Oh, I took this from the bar

down the street. Does that mean I get a free drink because I brought you a new glass?" I said, "No, it means you need to leave because you stole a glass from another bar!" It blew my mind.

What's your signature drink?

One of my favorite drinks to make is a Sidecar. I like that it's a good, kind of old-school drink. You can put some good brandy or cognac with it. It's not too sweet, not too sour and it's got a good flavor. And both guys and girls can order it. ■





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Unexpected Flavors

HOUSE-MADE LIQUEURS INSPIRED
BY THE WILLAMETTE VALLEY by William Kennedy

he people behind popular Eugene restaurant Party Downtown, located at 55 W. Broadway, apply a "make-it-in-house" ethic to everything they do, from curing meats to baking bread. Bartender James West is particularly passionate about house-made liqueurs — distilled spirits infused with the flavors of fruit, berries, herbs or even flowers.

"I want to make things that are for sale in the liquor store," West says. "But if we have as good or better ingredients in the valley, I will forgo buying something and make it myself."

"Liqueur implies richness, viscosity," he continues, adding that liqueurs have high sugar content but shouldn't be thought of as strictly dessert drinks. "I always want people to be brave about when they're having things and not feel contrived to a sequence of an experience," West says, explaining that many liqueurs are aperitifs — or "before-the-meal" beverages.

This past winter, a popular drink on West's menu was the house-made Irish Cream: Clontarf Irish whiskey, organic condensed milk, organic half 'n' half, Wandering Goat espresso, chocolate ganache and organic almond and vanilla extracts.

West serves the drink over frozen Wandering Goat Abyssinian coffee cubes and even makes his own half 'n' half. "Half milk, half heavy cream adds a nuanced richness," he says.

West uses recipes as a reference when making liqueurs but frequently expands on them. "The

instructions are really easy," West says, "but it's up to you to choose the quality of ingredients and really take it somewhere that has more potential."

And being located in the heart of the Willamette Valley, West has access to a dizzying array of quality ingredients to experiment with — making everything from Doug fir brandy to elderflower liqueur.

"I go and actually forage my own elderflowers with a hoe and a basket," West says. "The whole energy is to harness anything we have seasonally available and make it instead of buying. If you're a gardener and you have great produce and fruit at home, you can make your own liqueurs."

West is currently working on a green walnut nocino — a sticky, spicy and sweet Italian liqueur. And during currant season — usually mid-summer — West makes his own crème de cassis, mixing black currants with pink ones from a tree in his own yard.

Crème de cassis is "definitely a liqueur," West says, "but is usually used as a mixing agent." West uses crème de cassis as a mixer in a popular drink called the Bourbon Renewal: bourbon, lemon, crème de cassis and bitters.

"One of the things that making house liqueurs does is it starts a conversation," West says. "You'll get some people that will come and have [the Irish Cream] and say, 'I remember, 15 years ago, I tried this and tried that.' You see that glint in their eye when they cared for a moment about craft mixing. And what we're doing now is reminding them of that."









Brain Freeze

RED WAGON AFTER DARK DARES TO MIX ICE CREAM WITH ALCOHOL by Amy Schneider

rom food cart to store front, Red Wagon
Creamery has come a long way. The ice cream
shop is well known for wonderfully eclectic,
handmade ice cream flavors like carrot jalapeño, peach rosemary and Saturday Morning,
meant to taste like the milk left over after a bowl of Fruit
Loops. But stick around after 10 pm on Friday and Saturday, and the creamery transforms into Red Wagon After
Dark, where bartender Amanda Hoffman throws booze
into the mix of creamy deliciousness.

"People come in thinking about dessert but still wanting another drink, so this is the perfect solution," says Hoffman, who has worked as a bartender for about 10 years and joined up with Red Wagon Creamery last fall. "It's really a great opportunity to be creative."

Amid the tumultuous hub of activity pervading downtown Eugene on a Friday night, the creamery is a pleasant place to chill out and enjoy drinks, ice cream or both at the same time. Blue sky-colored walls, cheerful lights strung along the ceiling, pews from a recently demolished church and handmade wooden tables lend a cheery atmosphere. A focus on sustainability adds a nice touch — instead of throwing away mountains of plastic tasting spoons every day, Red Wagon has a permanent stock that gets washed and reused.

"I like this location, and with us being a more family-oriented business, it's helping draw people back to downtown," says co-owner Stuart Phillips, who started the business with his wife Emily Phillips, a chef and the mastermind behind Red Wagon's unique flavors. "We have people coming in who say they haven't been in the downtown area for over 20 years."

Emily Phillips came up with the idea of combining liquor and ice cream, and she and Stuart Phillips advertised for a bartender on Craigslist. "The ad said we were looking for 'a creative bartender with flair, but not TGI Friday's kind of flair," Stuart Phillips says. Hoffman answered their ad and was soon brainstorming ice cream cocktail ideas.

Red Wagon has been making Ninkasi and Falling Sky beer floats for years, but Hoffman expanded the menu with spiked milkshakes and specialty items like the Frozen Goat Latte, which combines Wandering Goat coffee, Kahlua, vodka and two flavors of ice cream. "It's the ultimate trifecta," she says.



Another favorite is what Hoffman calls a "chocolate lover's delight," the Chocolate Wagon. Hoffman drizzles chocolate fudge down the sides of a glass and then adds a blended concoction of Red Wagon's signature Heart of Chocolate ice cream, hazelnut-flavored Frangelico and Baileys for an additional touch of creaminess. Chocolate whipped cream tops it off, and one sip leaves you drowning in chocolate-y bliss.

"I had never been part of starting a bar before," Hoffman says, "and it was really cool coming into it with a blank slate."

Hoffman's menu also includes non-ice-cream cocktails of her own design. The Downtown Eugene — a Manhattan for Oregonians — mixes sweet vermouth with bourbon

and replaces cherry juice with grenadine. "We also serve Jell-O shots, which I'm relatively famous for," she says. As spring arrives and the seasonal menu changes, Hoffman says she's looking forward to adding new berries and herbs to her repertoire. A marionberry lemon drop is in the works.

As if ice cream cocktails aren't entertainment enough, Red Wagon After Dark features Cards Against Humanity Fridays and Bingo Saturdays, with prizes ranging from Sizzle Pie gift cards to Angry Birds fruit snacks. As Hoffman says, "We're different from every other place you'll find downtown."

Red Wagon After Dark in Red Wagon Creamery, 55 W. Broadway, is open Friday and Saturday nights from 10 pm to midnight. Regular store hours are 2 to 10 pm Sunday through Thursday and 2 pm to midnight on Fridays and Saturdays.

Get Thee to AA

UNDERAGE DRINKING WITH UNUSUAL CONSEQUENCES by Silas Valentino

y dad approached parenting in his own way. When my older brother Taylor started wearing obscene clothing during his rebellious youth, my dad responded by wearing a brown bag over his head like a chef's hat the next time the two of them went grocery shopping. He's a maverick in just about every way except his fashion, so it makes sense he made me attend an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting after I was caught drinking during high school.

In early 2007, my friends and I got together at a house without parents and went to town on a bottle of cheap whiskey called Black Velvet. Being 14 years old, as well as a fool, I couldn't handle the liquor and started throwing up on the driveway. They didn't know what to do with me so they called my dad and told him I had food poisoning from

a burrito — a classic cover-up. My dad picked me up and soon noticed the scent of alcohol. When I awoke from my slumber, he had a repentance list ready, and at the bottom was "attend an AA meeting."

I found a meeting at my local community center, and with a belly full of butterflies, I entered the room. I was hoping it would be a low-key experience, but that was not the case. It turned out to be a chip awards ceremony (a celebration in recognition of sobriety), and the room was packed. I tried to disappear in the back with the Oreos and coffee, but a generous woman spotted me and offered a seat that was at the very front of the room. Terrified and noticeably awkward, I listened to the stories, accomplishments and regrets from local townspeople.

An older gentleman gave his testimony and then earned his 30-year chip, but even after such a feat I got

the sense that he battled with his alcoholism day by day. I then recognized a friend's parent and together we shared a tender moment of confidentiality. Strangers exchanged their problems and successes and after an hour we all held hands and chanted, "Keep coming back; it works if you work it."

The whole experience was an echo of that scene in *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back* when Luke has the vision of Vader in the swamp caves of Dagobah. There's a thin line between control and powerlessness. My dad didn't send me to an AA meeting because he thought I had a problem — he did it so I could see what might happen if I let alcohol control my life. Eight years later, I'm at the end of my college career, a time where alcoholism has lobbied its way into the norm, and due to my childhood AA visit I'm able to appreciate the value of choice. ■





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